Alternate assessment, gaps, and other challenges!

A view of current practices from the technical assistance perspective

Panelist: Rachel Quenemoen, technical assistance team leader, NCEO

Overview

- A brief review of regulation language on alternate assessment
- A close look at options for alternates, and how the term "grade level" plays out in state discussions
- Clarification of academic content and achievement standards – definitions and relationships
- Examples of students with significant cognitive disabilities achieving in the grade level curriculum: Massachusetts; Kentucky
- Assumptions about "other" students who may be affected by gaps in instruction, curriculum, and assessment
- State illustrations: Connecticut; Ohio

Alternate Assessments as defined in "1% Rule"

- Aligned with the State's content standards.
- Yield results separately in reading/language arts and math.
- Designed and implemented to support use of the results to determine AYP.

Alternate Assessments should have…

- Clearly defined structure
- Guidelines for which students may participate
- Clearly defined scoring criteria and procedures
- Report format that clearly communicates student performance in terms of the academic achievement standards defined by the State

Alternate Assessments

Must meet the same requirements for high technical quality that apply to regular assessments under NCLB:

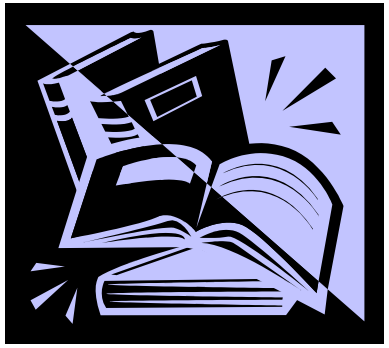
- **Validity**
- **Reliability**
- **Accessibility**
- **Objectivity**
- **Consistent with nationally-recognized professional and technical standards.**

See Peer Review Guidance, AERA papers, other technical resources

States may use more than one alternate assessment

- Alternate assessment scored against grade-level achievement standards
- Alternate assessment scored against alternate achievement standards
- Both must be aligned to the State's academic content standards

Alternate What?



Content standards are not changed for any of the options – now that we have grade level definitions, we start there for all assessment options.

Alternate achievement standards may be set for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

What does "grade level" mean?

See handout on grade level

Starting Point: Access to and progress in the SAME challenging curriculum/ content for ALL students, including those with significant disabilities

Title I Regulations Addressing Academic Content and Achievement Standards

- **July 5, 2002**

- **December 9, 2003**

Grade level terms, continued:

Grade level achievement standards

Alternate achievement standards

Alternate achievement standards set by grade level ("grade level alternate achievement standards" or "grade by grade alternate achievement standards")

Assessment Options

- General assessment w/wo accommodations

- Alternate assessment on grade level achievement standards –**alternate ways of showing proficiency on the grade-level content standards (or GLEs) against grade-level achievement standards**

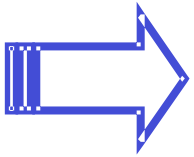
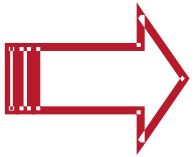
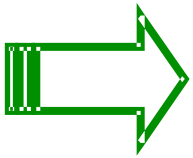
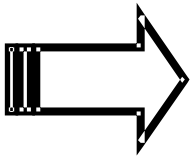
- Alternate assessment on alternate achievement standards –**alternate ways of showing proficiency on the SAME grade-level content standards (or GLEs) (extended or expanded) against alternate achievement standards**

Development Process for Alternate Achievement Standards

- **Begin from state academic content standards for grade in which student is enrolled**
- **Adapt or extend standards to ensure meaningful access for students with significant cognitive disabilities**
- **Draft *proposed* achievement descriptors (sometimes called "Performance Level Descriptors") that describe at least three proficiency levels**
- **Assess students and score results against preliminary scoring criteria and draft achievement descriptors**
- **Set achievement standards, refine achievement descriptors, fine-tune the assessment method and scoring criteria**

- **Adapted from Jan Sheinker presentation on April 2004 teleconference - http://education.umn.edu/nceo/Presentations/tele8.htm**

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Performance levels		Labels each level of achievement
Performance descriptors		Describes each level of performance
Exemplars		Sample student work at each level of performance
Cut Scores		Scores that **separate** the different levels of performance

FROM: Handbook for Professional Development in Assessment Literacy, Jan Sheinker and Doris Redfield

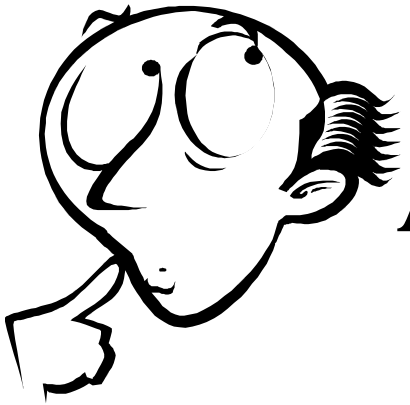
What does it look like when students with significant cognitive disabilities access and make progress in the general curriculum at grade level?

- Massachusetts – Bobby J and the life cycle of the frog – Dan Wiener, Massachusetts Department of Education
- Kentucky – video clips – Jacqui Kearns, University of Kentucky ILSSA Inclusion Project

Who are the "other" students who may be affected by a gap of some kind?

Common question: How many students "can" achieve grade-level achievement standards, with the best instruction and access?

Kevin McGrew studies and NCEO paper: http://www.iapsych.com/index.htm



Alternative question:

How many schools currently ensure every child has the services, supports, and specialized instruction necessary to succeed in the grade-level curriculum?

Assumption: A few students in the "gap" truly cannot show what they know on our current assessments. But others – perhaps many - students have been failed by our system of curriculum and instruction. They have not been taught the challenging grade-level curriculum. The policy goal is first and foremost to correct that situation.

Assumption: Some (unknown number) students in the "gap" may not achieve to proficiency at grade level by high school, even with the best possible curriculum and instruction, but we don't know which ones or how many. We need to find that out by giving them the opportunity to succeed.

Solutions?

Assumption: We need to close gaps in curriculum and instruction as well to make our assessment system truly accessible – and really push practice to make that occur as quickly as possible!

Assumption: All students, including those who we may not have expected to achieve in the past, have the right to be taught as if they can succeed, even if they all do not ultimately achieve proficiency in all areas.

What can we do in our assessment and accountability policies and practices to move MOST (99%) students into the general assessment, and to ensure all students achieve at the highest level possible?

Connecticut will address that question in their presentation!

What would a schooling system built on grade-level content for ALL students look like?

How do we ensure this is happening in OUR schools? Ohio will address that question in their presentation!

Strand: Life Science (Biology)
Learning Standards for… Life Cycles and Heredity
Grade 3 (MA)

Recognize that plants and animals go through predictable life cycles that include birth, growth, development, reproduction, and death.

Describe the major stages that characterize the life cycle of the frog and the butterfly as they go through metamorphosis

Essence of the Standards – Bobby J Student Work from MA

- **Recognize the 4 major stages of an organism's life cycle:**
  - **Birth**
  - **Development/growth**
  - **Reproduction**
  - **Death**
- **Explain frog/butterfly life cycles**

Teaching and learning in the grade-level content - KY

Kentucky video clips – Inclusion Project